

Internal Text Structures

When you are reading informational text, you will notice that authors use many different text structures or organizational patterns to organize their information. The following chart lists signal words, definitions, and examples of some of the most common text structures you will encounter when reading informational text:

Text Structure	Signal Words	Definition	Example
Cause and Effect	so that, because of, thus, unless, since, as a result, then, reasons for, consequently, explanation for, nevertheless, thus, accordingly	The writer explains the reasons for an event or phenomenon.	So many Bald Eagles were killed by Desticides and illegal "lunting. They were in danger of becoming extinct.
Comparison/ Contrast	different from, same as, alike, similar to, unlike, but, as well as, yet, either... or, compared to, in contrast, while, although, unless, however	The writer discusses the similarities and differences of two ideas, objects, or processes.	Golden Eagles are apt to hunt for prey while Bald Eagles are more likely to take an easy meal.
Enumeration or Listing	to begin with, first, second, in addition, next, then, last, finally, another, also, most important	The writer presents information in a structure that resembles an outline. It is often presented in bulleted format.	1. Golden Eagles are birds of prey. 2. Golden Eagles search for prey. 3. Golden Eagles swoop through the air to attack their prey.
Sequential or Chronological ~ Process	first, second, third, now, before, after, then, next, finally, following, while, meanwhile, last, during, not long, when, on date	The writer presents a series of events or explains a procedure or process in the order they happen.	First, Golden Eagles soar high along ridges near their nests. Then, they search for prey. When a meal is spotted, they attack in a long swoop.
Concept/ Definition	is, for example, involves, can be, defined, an example, for instance, in act, also, contain, make up	The writer introduces an idea and explains what it is.	Golden Eagles are powerful raptors with large dark brown bodies and small heads with golden Drowns.
Generalization/ Description	is, for example, involves, can be, defined, an example, for instance, in act, also, contain, make up	The writer explains phenomenon and processes by listing examples and unique characteristics.	Solden Eagles are birds of prey.

External Text Structures or Features

A text may contain multiple external text structures, such as:

- Underlined words
- Headings and Subheadings
- Illustrations (graphics, images, maps, diagrams, etc.)
- Italics/Bold Text
- Definitions (within text, usually in parentheses, or in the footer or margin of a page)

External text structures can help you read and understand informational (or expository) text. The following chart lists some commonly used text structures, their format and their purpose:

External Text feature	Format	Purpose-How does it help me read and understand the information?
Table of contents	Chapters	This provides me with a list of information included in the text.
Headings	Headings and Subheadings	I can read a brief phrase that tells me what information I will find in the paragraph below it.
Bold or italicized words	Bold or italicized words	These words are important terms that I must be able to define so I can understand the information.
Graphics/illustrations	Graphics/illustrations	A picture, graph, or chart that provides me more information OR arranges the information in a visual format so I might understand it better.

To help you understand how internal and external text structures are used together, the following chart lists informational (or expository) writing assignments and the internal text structure and external text structure/feature that could be used when completing them:

Writing Assignment	Internal Text Structure/External Text Structure
Biography	Chronological Order/Timeline
Report about a country or state	Description/Map
Article for a school newspaper about a school related question or issue	Problem and Solution/Chart
Report about a life cycle	Sequential/Diagram
Essay about how something has changed overtime, such as clothing styles	Compare and Contrast/Pictures
Article about the effects of a new law or important news event	Cause and Effect/Subheadings, Definitions, Italics

Using Graphic Organizers:

Cluster/map/web — creative writings, just to come up with ideas for your essay

Flowchart - chronological essays

Venn Diagram - comparing and contrasting (what goes in the center?)

Listing - coming up with ideas

Outline - coming up with ideas and organizing your essay by paragraph